तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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KRISHNA'S SLAVE

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Do not be diminished in your enthusiasm. You should always think of yourself that you are sold to Krishna as a slave. That is the only way to get relief of the slavery of Maya.

— Letter to Sudama, 1 January 1971.

THE SUPREME THIEF

Part One

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

At the age of two or three, Krishna would go to the houses of the *gopīs* and steal *mākhan*, butter. The *gopīs* were delighted to feed *mākhan* to Gopal, but they came to Yasoda and made complaints, "Yasoda, your son Gopal is coming to our house and stealing all our *mākhan*." Just see how wonderful this is! They were delighted to feed Gopal *mākhan*, and then, coming to Yasoda, they lodged complaints against him.

Yasoda became angry. She said, "Gopal! Have you been eating *mākhan*?"

In broken language, this two-year-old boy said, *o meyā, me nehi mākhan khāyā* — "Mother, I have not eaten *mākhan*."

Then mother became angrier, "Yes, *mākhan* is there on your mouth. Are you telling lies? *Mākhan* is there, why are you telling lies?"

Gopal said, "Mother, they have smeared *mākhan* on my mouth."

Do you think Gopal told a lie? No, he never tells lies. He speaks the truth, but his trick is how he speaks. "o *meyā mene hi mākhan khāyā*" means "O mother, I have eaten *mākhan*." he spoke in such a way that it had two meanings, positive and negative. Gopal is a very, very tricky fellow. He knows how to speak in such a way. We cannot understand it; we will commit a mistake. There is no fault with Gopal. He is Viswambhara, who maintains the whole universe, who supplies food to all living entities in the whole universe. He is not attached to anything. Everything is his property. He is the only proprietor. *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam* — Everything belongs to *īśa*, the Supreme Lord. Everything is his property. Then why did he go to some other house and steal? Because it was such a pleasurable *līlā* for his dear devotees. He got pleasure and the devotees got pleasure. It is so wonderful! When Gopal went to the house of some *gopī*, liking Gopal very much, she fed him, "Take this *mākhan*." So it is not amazing that *mākhan* was smeared over his mouth. Gopal's black face with white *mākhan* on it looked so nice. When the *gopīs* saw such wonderful beauty, a black face with white *mākhan*, they became very much delighted. Whenever Gopal got the opportunity, he would steal. He was a two or three-year-old child, so his nature was naturally fickle. He had some wickedness in him. When mother rebuked and scolded Gopal, then for some days he would not go to the houses of the *gopīs*. When Gopal didn't come, and the *gopīs* weren't getting his *darśana*, they felt very distressed, went to the house of mother Yasoda, and inquired, "Why isn't Gopal coming to our house? Is he okay? Is he okay?"

next column ☞

Feeding the Monkeys

Mother Yasoda said to Gopal, "Your intelligence, your play, your activities, are like that of the monkeys. And you are with so many monkeys. Gopal, are you not afraid, surrounded by so many monkeys?"

Gopal said: "Mother, these monkeys helped Lord Rama. Rama was going to conquer Lanka and kill Ravan. The monkeys underwent severe tribulations, suffering, suffering, suffering. Lord Rama was wandering in the forest. He had no good food to give them. Sometimes they were jumping from one branch to another to get some fruit, and some days they might not have gotten anything, so they had to fast. Now see, mother, how they are stretching out their hands, begging for *mākhan*, 'Give us, give us, give us *mākhan*.' They are eating with so much delight."

Yasoda-mata, due to her *vātsalya-rasa*, parental love, forgot that Krishna is *bhagavān*. She was only thinking how to make everything auspicious for her son, how to make her son happy. By the activity of *yoga-māyā*, she was only thinking, "My son, my son!" The *Bhāgavatam* (10.8.45) describes:

trayyā copaniṣadbhiś ca sāṅkhya-yogaiś ca sātvataiḥ
upagīyamāna māhātmyaṁ hariṁ sāmanyatātmajam

The glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are studied throughout the three Vedas, the Upanishads, the literature of *sāṅkhya-yoga*, and other vaiṣṇava literature. Yet mother Yasoda considered that Supreme Person her ordinary child.

Those who are *sāṅkhya-yogīs* engage in analytical discussion on him. Those who are devotees offer prayers to the Supreme Lord Krishna. But mother Yasoda said, "He is my son, he is my son!" — *sāmanya-tātmajam*. This is pure *vātsalya-rasa*.

Complaints

As Gopal grew up, his wickedness also increased, and every day mother Yasoda would get complaints, "Your son Gopal steals, steals, steals." So mother Yasoda became angry. She thought very deeply, "Why is my son stealing? We have enough *mākhan* in our house. Why is he stealing from other's houses?" She thought, "Oh, I have engaged the maidservants to churn the yogurt to make *mākhan*. I have not made it with my own hands. Therefore Gopal doesn't like it and he goes to others' houses to steal. From today I'll do it with my own hands." So with her own hands she milked the best cows available, and then churned the yogurt and prepared *mākhan*. She woke up very early in the morning and engaged in churning *mākhan* for Gopal. With her mouth she was singing the glories of Gopal. While her hands were churning yogurt, the bangles on her wrists were producing a tinkling sound, "*ruñjhun, ruñjhun, ruñjhun, ruñjhun*." Gopal was sleeping. Waking up and finding mother not there, he cried, "*Mā, mā, mā, mā, mā*."

Yasoda said, "Gopal, I'm here. I'm churning yogurt, preparing *mākhan* for you. Come here." Gopal went there and got up onto the lap of mother Yasoda and started sucking her breast. At this time, at a distance, mother had put a big pot of milk on the stove and the milk was boiling. It began to swell up and pour out onto the ground. Noticing it, mother Yasoda immediately stood up, put Gopal on the ground, and ran to take the pot off the stove. Gopal was sucking her breast and was not satisfied, so he took a piece of stone and threw it at the pot of yogurt. The pot was broken to pieces and all the yogurt poured out onto the ground. Gopal was angry, crying and crying. He went to another house and started stealing *mākhan*. Standing up on a grinding mortar, he began stealing the butter that was hanging there on a swing.

Footprints

With her body, mind, and speech, twenty-four hours, day and night, mother Yasoda was engaged in the loving service of Krishna. No other thought was there in her. She is the last limit of *vātsalya-rasa*, parental love. She is the mother of the whole universe — *nikhila-viśvara-māta-svarūpa*. Mother Yasoda, whose son is Lord Krishna, possesses such pure *vātsalya-rasa*, mother's love. In order to save the pot of milk from boiling over, she put the child Krishna on the ground. Was this cruel on her part? No, no! Krishna is *sevya*. Yasoda is *sevaka*. Mother Yasoda is the servant. Krishna is to be served. *Bhakta* and *bhagavān*. Such *premī-bhaktas* are twenty-four hours, day and night, engaged in loving service in varieties of ways. They only want to serve Krishna and give him all pleasure — *kṛṣṇārthe akhila-ceṣṭā* (*Cc. madhya* 22.126). Mother Yasoda's heart was completely filled with *putra-sneha*, a loving attitude towards her son. Where is the cruelty? It is not cruelty. Sometimes such a thing happens, but it is for the service of Krishna.

In this pastime there is *līlānanda*, the Lord relishing the mellow of his sweet *līlā*, and there is also the *bhaktas* experiencing *premānanda*, getting pleasure from rendering such loving service unto Krishna. Two types of *ānanda*, the Lord's *līlānanda* and the *bhakta's premānanda*, combined together to create *apūrva paramānanda* — unprecedented, supreme *ānanda*. The Lord and the devotee, *bhagavān* and *bhakta*, both become merged, drowned, in an ocean of *ānanda*. No one can describe it with language, for it is indescribable. *raso vai saḥ* — He is the reservoir of all *rasa*, mellow. He is *rasa* himself. He is *rasika*, the relisher, and he is also to be relished, *āsvādya*. He gives opportunity to his *premī-bhaktas* to relish such mellow.

Taking the pot of milk off the stove, mother Yasoda returned and saw the big pot of yogurt completely broken to pieces and all the yogurt poured out onto the ground. Gopal was not there. Gopal had gone out to another house. On the floor were his footprints. Tracing the footprints, mother Yasoda saw, "Ah, Gopal is now standing on a grinding mortar and stealing *mākhan* from the swing. In the house, many, many monkeys are there. The house is filled with monkeys and they are all eating *mākhan*. Gopal is giving *mākhan* to them. The monkeys are stretching out their hands and eating. So much *mākhan* has fallen onto the floor that the whole floor is looking white."

Punishment

Mother Yasoda became very angry. Taking a cane in her hand, stealthily, stealthily, she came into the room and stood just behind Gopal. Seeing mother Yasoda with a cane in her hand, the monkeys immediately jumped down and ran out the door. Gopal looked back, "Oh, mother is here with a cane in her hand and it looks like she is in a very grave, angry mood!" The monkeys ran away and left Gopal standing on the grinding mortar. Jumping down, he tried to get out of the room, but mother was very angry.

Mother thought, "I must bind him. I won't spare him today." Thinking this, she ran after Gopal with a rope to tie him up. But Gopal manifested some *aiśvarya*, opulence. He decided, "I will not be caught by mother. She will run behind me and I will run, but I'll not be caught." That is *aiśvarya*. Gopal was running, but not straight. He was moving like a snake, running in a zigzag way. Mother Yasoda is a bit of a fat lady; she was running behind Gopal, but couldn't catch him. She became tired and was breathing heavily. The flower garland of *karabīra* (oleander) flowers in her braid had fallen down on the ground. Her hair was all scattered and she was very tired.

At last, mother's eye fell upon the reddish lotus feet of Gopal. Those reddish lotus feet of the Lord are the object of meditation of the devotees. She thought, "Oh, such soft feet. If they are pricked by some thorn, Gopal will get so much pain." With this thought, she became morose. When the devotee's vision is fixed at the reddish lotus feet of the Lord, he becomes captured. Gopal thought, "Now I'll be caught. Mother is very tired, so I'll allow her to catch me." In this way, mother Yasoda caught him.

She was very angry that day. Gopal had put her into so much anxiety, "Every day so many complaints of stealing, and he has broken this big pot of yogurt, then giving all the *mākhan* to the monkeys, and making me so tired. This little baby has vexed me in so many ways!" Mother was very angry. With her right hand she's holding a cane, and with her left hand she has caught Gopal. Mother then bound him up to the wooden grinding mortar.

Mother's Cane

Such a nice pastime in Gokul! Gopal has stolen *mākhan*. Mother Yasoda is trying to catch him. Gopal is running very swiftly in a zigzag way. Mother Yasoda is running behind him, *drutya gopyā*, and at last catches him. Such a form! Such a picture! A *bhakta* whose *rasa* is *vātsalya-rasa* may think, "Oh, I want to see this form." Gopal running and mother Yasoda running behind him. At last she catches him.

Seeing mother in this angry mood, Gopal started crying. His earrings were shaking because of heavy breathing. His chest was moving up and down, and with his two palms he was rubbing his eyes. There was a black ointment that mother had put on his eyes and this ointment had become smeared over his black face and the red palms of his hands. Such a wonderful form! Satyavrata Muni has written (*Dāmodarāṣṭaka* verse 2):

rudantaṁ muhur netra-yugmaṁ mṛjantaṁ
karāmbhoja-yugmena sātaṅka-netram
muhuḥ śvāsa-kampa-trirekhāṅka-kaṇṭha-
sthita-graiva dāmodaraṁ bhakti-baddham

[Seeing the whipping stick in his mother's hand,] he is crying and rubbing his eyes again and again with his two lotus hands. His eyes are filled with fear, and the necklace of pearls around his neck, which is marked with three lines like a conch shell, is shaking because of his quick breathing due to crying. To this Supreme Lord, Sri Damodar, whose belly is bound not with ropes but with his mother's pure love, I offer my humble obeisances.

This is *vātsalya-rasa*. Standing there with a cane in her hand, mother Yasoda was angry. Gopal was crying, and said, "Mother, why are you holding that cane? Throw it away." Mother laughed and said, "Yes, there is no need of a cane now. I have bound him up." So mother Yasoda threw away the cane. *bhāyanaṁ-bhāyaṅkara* — The Supreme Lord, who is fearful to all demons, was crying out of fear, seeing the cane in his mother's hand. Mother Yasoda said, "O Gopal, you are very much frightened. You are crying." Gopal, looking at his friends, laughed. Then, looking at mother Yasoda, he cried. Gopal suppressed his laughing, because if mother Yasoda saw his laugh the *līlā* would be spoiled.

While this was taking place, some cowherd men and women and some cowherd boys came. The young girls, seeing the pitiable condition of mother Yasoda, how she was so fatigued, looked at each other and smiled. The grown-up women said, "O Yasoda, why are you so angry? Gopal is just a young child. Release him, release him. Don't bind him." ❀

— to be continued in the next issue

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The Glories of Srinivas Acharya

Srila Narahari Chakravarti

Bhakti-ratnākara *14.209-212*

belābalī-rāga

jaya jaya śrī śrīnivāsa guṇa-dhāma
dīna-hīna-tāraṇa prema-rasāyana
aichana madhurima nāma

(Refrain) All glories, all glories to Srinivas Acharya, who is the abode of good qualities! He delivered the poor and fallen and gave them the nectarean elixir of ecstatic love — the sweet holy name.

kāñcana-varaṇa haraṇa tanu su-lalita
kauṣika-vasana virāje
prema-nāma kari' kahata bhāgavate
so-i varaṇa tanu sāje

His graceful body was more effulgent than gold. His silk garments were splendid. He chanted the holy name in ecstatic love. He preached *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. His form was glorious.

nija-nija bhakata pāriṣada saṅgahi
prakaṭa su-caraṇāravinde
niravadhi vadanahi nāma virājita
rādhe kṛṣṇa govinda

In the association of his devotee companions he manifested his glorious lotus feet. On his mouth the holy names, "Radhe! Krishna! Govinda!" were always splendidly manifest.

yugala-bhajana, līlā-āsvādana,
grantha-kalpataru hāte
tuyā vinu adhame śaraṇa ko de-oba
govinda-dāsa anāthe

He worshiped the divine couple and relished the nectar of their pastimes. He always carried the wish-fulfilling tree of the Goswami literature. O Srinivas Prabhu! Without you the fallen souls have no shelter, and Govinda Das has no other master! ❀

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